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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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SUBJECT Fire Department at Oroshaza/Other Hungarian
Fire Departments

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

1. The 1944 population of the city of Oroshaza was approximately 32,000, with an additional 43,000 inhabitants in surrounding villages and farms. The city had no system of fire alarm boxes. Houses with telephones had signs on them which directed anyone discovering a fire to call the fire department. A 24 hour fire watch was maintained from the 42-metre steeple of the Evangelical Church. A direct telephone circuit connected this post with the firehouse. The watch was changed every three hours. This station was used before and during World War II.
2. The city had no fire lines. Fires were extinguished by water carried in the tanks of the trucks. Six tanks, part of the city water system, in various locations in the city were used as sources of water. If a stream was close to the fire, its water was used and carried to the scene of the fire by the trucks' pumps. Although not all trucks had water tanks, all were equipped with pumps. The larger cities - Budapest, Győr, Pécs - had fire alarm systems and fire lines.
3. The fire department of Oroshaza included 16 paid firemen and approximately 80 volunteers. The paid firemen worked 24 hours and wore off duty 48 hours, except during emergencies. Approximately 80 volunteers were available at all times. There was one fire station located in the city hall. The fire department had an ambulance and functioned as an emergency squad. Each fireman received first aid training. Each fire company in the smaller Hungarian cities had an ambulance and functioned as an emergency squad. Larger cities had a separate company for the emergency squad. [REDACTED] estimate that the Budapest firemen in 1944 numbered 650 with about 200 men in the emergency squad.
4. The city of Oroshaza had five fire trucks. Seven pieces of horse-drawn equipment were located in barns outside the city, but they were never used and were kept only as relics. Hungarian fire trucks were painted bright red like US fire equipment until 1943. Thereafter they were painted smoke gray to make them less conspicuous to low-flying aircraft.

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5. Details of [] equipment, typical for a Hungarian city of 25-40 thousand follow:

- a. Manufacturer: Mercedes-Benz, built in Hungary under German license. Year purchased: 1939. Motor: Diesel. Tank capacity: 4 thousand liters. [] took this truck to Germany where it was confiscated by German officials.
- b. Manufacturer: Berliet (French). Year purchased: 1928. Tank capacity: 22 hundred liters. Liters per minute: 800. Pressure: 12-14 kilos. This truck was seized by Soviet forces in the vicinity of Győr.
- c. Manufacturer: Dodge (US). Year acquired: 1922-23. Tank capacity: none. Liters per minute: 400. Pressure: 8-10 kilos. This vehicle was converted to a fire truck by a garage in Orosháza. [] took it to Germany but US forces ordered it returned to Hungary.
- d. Manufacturer: Isotta-Fraschini (Italian). Year acquired: 1930. Tank capacity: 800 liters. Liters per minute: 400. Pressure: 8-10 kilos. [] left this truck behind.
- e. Manufacturer: Chevrolet (US). Year acquired: 1927. Tank capacity: none. Liters per minute: 400. Pressure: 8-10 kilos. [] left this truck behind.
- f. Magosix ambulance (Hungarian). Year acquired: 1928. This vehicle was taken by the Hungarian army in late September 1944.

6. A standard size of fire hose was used throughout Hungary, [] A 72 mm hose was used to lift water from tanks, streams, etc, to the pumps. Fire hose was imported from Germany. Each truck carried 5-6 soda acid type extinguishers and 500 meters of fire hose. Foamite, CO₂, or Pyrene extinguishers were not commonly in use, although certain companies did have them.

7. Trucks carried several 5-6 metre hand ladders which could be extended to 10-21 meters. Only the larger cities had hook and ladder trucks, much shorter than their US counterparts. The average size was 48 meters. The city of Szeged purchased a 48 meter Metz (German) ladder truck in 1939.

8. Hungary exchanged wheat for five hundred Kleeckner-Deutz fire trucks in 1942. The smaller trucks had 15 hundred liter tanks; the larger had 25 hundred liter tanks. These trucks could pump 2 thousand liters of water per minute using 22 kilos of air pressure. Most of these trucks were sent to larger cities. Some were used at army bases and airfields.

Following World War II, an undetermined number of US-built Dodge army trucks were converted to fire engines. [] the fire department of Orosháza was using []

9. Hungarian fire departments are now [] organized along military lines. Most officers are Party members, and promotion is based on political activity rather than merit. Pre-World War II fire departments were extremely efficient, but I heard in 1950 that their efficiency had slipped considerably. The main school for officers is located at Kun Utsa (Street) 2, Budapest 8 where it has been located since before World War II. Training schools for firemen are located in Debrecen, Szeged, Pécs, Győr, Szekesfehervar, and Miskolc. During World War II, gas warfare schools were located in Budapest and Debrecen.

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